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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KRAMER FAREWELL TOUR: ST. LUCIA

REF: BRIDGETOWN 1542

Classified By: Ambassador Mary Kramer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) On October 13, Ambassador Kramer traveled to St. Lucia for farewell meetings with Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony, Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy and Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Senator Victor Philip La Corbiniere. The Ambassador used the meetings to gauge St. Lucia's priorities as well as prevailing attitudes toward Americans. The Prime Minister and Attorney General sought to explain their frustration with perceived U.S. disengagement in the region and lobby for additional U.S. resources. The Governor General, however, stressed the importance of personal responsibility over dependency. The Ambassador appreciated the Governor General's constructive views and was equally impressed with her gracious hosting of the 45th Anniversary Celebration of Peace Corps in St. Lucia. End Summary.

PRIME MINISTER KENNY ANTHONY

¶2. (C) "We (the Caribbean) want to love you, but you're not giving us the opportunity to do so" was Prime Minister Kenny Anthony's response when asked about Caribbean attitudes toward Americans. The good news, according to PM Anthony, is that the Caribbean does feel a connection to the United States, particularly through U.S. generosity toward the people in the region. He also affirmed that "the U.S. tops the list with Canada for Caribbean affection." However, PM Anthony believed that in recent years, the United States has not invested time and effort in the region, referring specifically to the "painful economic adjustment" brought on by U.S. opposition to banana trade preferences. (Note: when the Ambassador told PM Anthony that Venezuela recently stood by Ecuador's call for the elimination of banana trade preferences, he glossed over the comment. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) PM Anthony perceived other missed opportunities to improve relations with the Caribbean, such as the economic strain from repatriating deportees from the U.S., inability to meet with high-level leaders in Washington, lack of coordination on Haiti, and lack of U.S. funding to support St. Lucia's domestic projects, namely scholarships and health

care. The Ambassador responded that the United States secured hundreds of millions of dollars for the region during her tenure, improved pre-departure processes for deportees, and assisted with highly successful counternarcotics operations. PM Anthony admitted that these were important contributions. He insisted, however, that such contributions are not as tangible as, for example, the new hospital funded by the European Union, which he claims, "stands as a visible monument."

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF ST. LUCIA

¶4. (SBU) Governor General Dame Pearlette Louisy provided the Ambassador with honest and constructive views on issues of poverty, crime, and the environment in St. Lucia. The Governor General told the Ambassador that "people need to take responsibility for their own behavior and cannot expect the government to clean everyone's backyard and raise their children." Dame Pearlette supported the same approach to the private sector, agreeing with the Ambassador that the hotel industry also needed to take more responsibility, and rely less on the government, for their customers' security.

¶5. (SBU) When asked about attitudes of St. Lucians toward the United States, the Governor General told the Ambassador that the lack of appreciation for U.S. generosity in the region may have more to do with the nature of the projects (i.e., tangibility) rather than the dollar amount. She also suggested that "it may be an information problem," and that the United States should raise more awareness in the media and among the public so that people can "make the link between global and local, and break down the issues for the common man." Later that evening, the Ambassador returned to the Governor General's residence to celebrate the 45th Anniversary of Peace Corps in St. Lucia, a perfect reminder that the United States has maintained this link with the Caribbean for the last 45 years.

ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

¶6. (C) Article 98 was the first order of business in the Ambassador's meeting with Senator Victor Phillip La Corbiniere, Attorney General and Justice Minister. AG La Corbiniere assured the Ambassador that the agreement should be ready for signature "quickly" after he discusses it in his next meeting with the Cabinet on October 23. AG La Corbiniere was careful not to "speak for the Cabinet" but told the Ambassador that the agreement should be ready for signing before the Ambassador departs post. AG La Corbiniere thanked the Ambassador for her responsiveness on the issue of deportee repatriation. AG La Corbiniere also noted considerable progress in the lead-time and information sharing among both countries' law enforcement communities, but admitted that debriefings on deportees still needed improvement because of the local police officers' hesitancy to ask questions.

¶7. (C) AG La Corbiniere also expressed concern with what he sees as an alarming new trend among drug traffickers: becoming less involved in the direct movement of drugs and more involved in the financial side of operations, via money laundering and real estate acquisition. According to AG La Corbiniere, these criminals will fall off the radar screen unless he has additional resources to hire a specialized financial investigation team to maintain a steady focus on financial crimes. The Ambassador replied that permanent IRS positions will be created in 2007 at Embassy Bridgetown which could expand opportunities for longer-term strategic planning and assistance to combat such illegal activities.

A CELEBRATION OF 45 YEARS OF PEACE CORPS IN ST. LUCIA

18. (U) The highlight of the Ambassador's farewell calls was the 45th Anniversary Celebration of the Peace Corps at the Governor General's residence. Dame Pearlette thanked the United States Peace Corps' friendship and service to the people of St. Lucia and expressed special gratitude to the past and present Volunteers in the country. The Ambassador pointed out that in many ways, Peace Corps Volunteers are our best ambassadors, whose inspirational work brings our two countries closer in friendship and mutual understanding. The Ambassador also confirmed that other U.S. efforts are underway, by the embassy as well as other U.S. agencies, that are making a difference in the lives of both St. Lucians and Americans, and creating stronger ties between our countries. The new Peace Corps Country Director, Kate Raftery, presented the Governor General with a small gift of appreciation for her country's cooperation and friendship with the Peace Corps, and acknowledged St. Lucia's contributions as well. Also present were former Peace Corps Volunteers, including the first Peace Corps Volunteer in St. Lucia, as well as St. Lucians that were former recipients of Peace Corps services and training.

COMMENT

19. (C) The Prime Minister, Governor General and Attorney General all expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the Ambassador's leadership and assistance to the region, as well as her "personal friendship." As is usual in meetings with St. Lucian officials, the Ambassador also heard some frustration over the perceived lack of "tangible" U.S. engagement in the region, followed by requests for more assistance. The conversation with the Governor General, however, showed that not everyone in the Eastern Caribbean wants to depend on others to "clean their own backyard," and many still appreciate the generosity of the United States in times of real need. As we have seen in other settings, like the Peace Corps Anniversary Celebration, such sentiments may be more widespread than PM Anthony would lead us to believe. Post takes this to be a positive sign that our relations with the region are much deeper than some may give us credit for.
KRAMER